



# MEJDI TOURS

**Tour:** Congregation Ner Shalom's Tour of Israel and the West Bank

**Dates:** May 4 - 14, 2023

## **Itinerary:**

### ***Day 1: Thursday, May 4, 2023: Arrival (no driver, no guide)***

- Upon arrival in Israel, transfer on your own to **Tel Aviv** if you are not on the group flight. A **group transfer** will be provided for everyone on the group flight.
- Get some much-needed sleep.

*Hotel: Tel Aviv-Jaffa*

### ***Day 2: Friday, May 5: Tel Aviv (1 guide)***

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Meet your guide over breakfast and then travel to the historic **Ahuzat Bayit neighborhood**, the original suburb modeled on **Herzl's vision in Altneuland** that grew into the modern city of **Tel Aviv**. There, take a walking tour beginning under the fig and Poinciana trees of **Rothschild Boulevard** to learn about the city's history and to observe some of **Tel Aviv's Bauhaus style buildings**.
  - o Begin outside the former house of **Eliyahu Golomb**, one of the founders of the **Haganah organization**, the pre-State Jewish military force that later evolved into the Israel Defense Force-the army of the State of Israel- in 1948. The guide will talk about how this became Haganah's main headquarters, with secret meetings held there until the wee hours where members discussed illegal Jewish immigration and settlement of Jews into **British Mandate Palestine**, as well as paramilitary operations.
  - o Visit **Independence Hall**, the site of the signing of Israel's Declaration of Independence, learn about the founding of the State of Israel.
- Take a leisurely break for lunch with time to explore, shop, and eat in the **Carmel Shuk Market** and the **Nahalat Binyamin Art Market**.
- Stroll up **Bialik Street**, home to Rubin Museum, the former residence of painter Reuven Rubin and Bialik House, the former residence of Israel's national poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. Beit Ha'ir, Tel Aviv's former town hall is at the top of the street.



# MEJDI TOURS

- Conclude the afternoon with a visit to **Meir Park**, opened in 1944 and named after the first mayor of Tel Aviv, Meir Dizengoff. Meir Park is home to a prominent city funded gay community center. Outside of the center, you can find a monument dedicated to the gay victims of the Holocaust and a garden serving as a memorial to 2009 shooting spree at a Tel Aviv LGBT youth club.
- Return to the hotel to **prepare for Shabbat**.
- Join with a Reform community for **Shabbat evening services**.
- Have **Shabbat dinner**.

*Hotel: Tel Aviv-Jaffa (B)*

## ***Day 3: Saturday, May 6: Culture and Music in a Shared Society (1 guide)***

- Have the **option of visiting different synagogues** in Tel Aviv, sleep in, or explore the city on your own.
  - Or everyone attends Shabbat morning services with a Reform congregation.
- Have **Shabbat lunch** together.
- In the afternoon take a walking tour through more of **Jaffa** through the lens of music with a member of the multi-ethnic hip hop group **System Ali**. The tour combines the history of the city of Jaffa in its 5,000 years of existence with a discussion of the conflictual issues of the city in recent decades through textual and musical works performed on the site.
- Have a group **Havdalah, processing session** and a discussion about the itinerary for the next day.
- Have **dinner on your own**.

*Hotel: Tel Aviv-Jaffa [B]*

## ***Day 4, Sunday, May 7: Culinary Experiences and Haifa (1 guide)***

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Check out after breakfast and travel north.
- Take a tour of **Tulip Winery**, a socially responsible winery located on a mountainside in **Kfar Tikva (Village of Hope)**, a small pastoral settlement whose population consists of people with special needs. Have a four-variety wine tasting.
- On your way to Haifa, enjoy a **home-hospitality Druze meal**.
- Then head to **Haifa**, a fascinating cultural mosaic made up of Jews and Arabs, veterans and newcomers, and Eastern and Western influences. There, visit the **Beit HaGefen** Center and explore Haifa's origins as a tolerant cosmopolitan city with diverse cultural treasures and religious traditions. Stroll through the **Museum Without Walls** in the **Wadi Nisnas**



# MEJDI TOURS

**neighborhood**, a public open-air museum meant to signify unity in a multicultural city and embody the concept of open dialogue between Jewish and Arab culture. Visit the **Baha'i Gardens** and other historical, religious, and cultural sites.

- Check into the hotel and have a **group dinner**.
- Have a group **processing session** and a discussion of the about the itinerary for the next day.

*Hotel: Haifa/Safed [B, L, D]*

## **Day 5: Monday, May 8: Tzfat and Jerusalem (1 guide)**

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Check out after breakfast and continue north to **Tzfat**. Walk the narrow stone lanes of the picturesque town of Tzfat (Safed) in Upper Galilee, a center of Kabbalah and one of the four Jewish holy cities. Visit its many synagogues such as the **Abuhav Synagogue, Ha-Ari Synagogue, and Caro Synagogue**. Learn about historical figures buried in Tzfat including visiting a cemetery and **the Cave of Shem and Ever**, one of the oldest historic sites in Tzfat with significance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Tour art galleries including **David Friedman's Kosmic Kabbalah Art gallery** and a candle shop.
- As you pass **Mt. Meron**, learn about **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai** (the Rashbi), the Mishnaic-era sage, rebel against Rome, and author of the Zohar and Rabbi Hillel the Elder who are both buried there.
- Make your way South towards **Jerusalem**.
- Pay a sobering visit to **Yad Vashem**, the Israeli **Holocaust Museum**.
- Have a guest educator lead a **spirituality processing session** reflecting on the visit to Yad Vashem.
- Leave the museum and sample your way through **Machane Yehuda**, Jerusalem's open-air shuk market, for an early evening nosh.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B]*

## **Day 6: Tuesday, May 9: Mount Zion and the City of David/Silwan (2 guides)**

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Visit **Mount Zion**, a holy site to Jews, Muslims, and Christians that is associated with both **King David's Tomb** and the **Jesus Last Supper**.
- Be welcomed to the **City of David/Silwan** area by a Jewish ideological settler who lives in this East Jerusalem neighborhood located just outside of the Old City.



# MEJDI TOURS

- Then have **lunch at a Palestinian community center in Silwan** to hear from Palestinian residents about the impact of the archaeological site and influx of ideological settlers in their neighborhood.
- Finally, tour the **City of David** archaeological site with an archaeologist from the archaeological activist organization Emek Shaveh.
- Have a **group processing session** and a discussion of the about the itinerary for the next day.
- Have **dinner on your own**.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, L]*

## ***Day 7: Wednesday, May 10: A Four Quarter Religion, History, and Art Tour of the Old City of Jerusalem (2 guides)***

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Enter the **Old City** through the **Dung Gate** and visit the **Kotel (Western Wall)** plaza and learn about the current situation to create an egalitarian section.
- Ascend to the **Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif** and tour the precinct.
- Have free time for **lunch on your own** in the **Jewish Quarter**.
- Visit the **Museum of Psalms** to participate in a text study of a selection of Psalms through art. The Museum of Psalms features the Psalms Collection, 150 paintings for each of the Psalms created by Moshe Tzvi Halevi Berger, one painting for each one of the Psalms.
- Learn about the **Christian “Stations of the Cross”** along the **Via Dolorosa** and the incense-filled halls of the **Holy Sepulchre Church**, the place identified as both the site of the crucifixion and the tomb of Jesus.
- Weave through the shops and alleyways of the **Arab shuk** (market) in the Old City, where you can have some free time to practice your haggling skills.
- Return to the hotel for a group processing session and a discussion of the about the itinerary for the next day.
- Go out to dinner near the hotel with **Professor Yofi Tirosh, PhD. Dr. Tirosh** is an expert of antidiscrimination law, employment and labor law, food law, and feminist jurisprudence. Her scholarship is located at the intersection between law, body, gender, and language. Tirosh's work explores diverse topics such as discursive analysis of legal texts, affirmative action, and antidiscrimination theory. Recently, her work focuses on the many ways in which the body and physical appearance are regulated by law, in contexts such as employers' appearance requirements, weight-based discrimination, privacy, and the legal treatment of physical differences between the sexes.
- Have a group **processing session** and a discussion about the itinerary for the next day.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, L, D]*



## ***Day 8: Thursday, May 11: Southern West Bank (2 guides)***

- Have an optional **morning meditations/chanting session**.
- Tour the **separation barrier** up close and discuss both its impact on Israelis and Palestinians and the images you see painted on the wall.
- Visit the **Walled Off Hotel**, set up and financed by world renowned Street Artist Banksy, to see their **museum and art gallery**.
- Spend the afternoon in Hebron's Old Town. Have lunch together. Then see the **Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs**. Walk down Shuahada Street. Visit the Women in Hebron Cooperative shop.
- End the day by meeting **Hadassah Froman**, an Orthodox Jewish peacemaker from the West Bank settlement of Tekoa and involved in the Abrahamic Reunion movement. She was the wife of the late Rabbi Menachem Froman, a pioneer in Jewish-Muslim peacemaking in the West Bank settlements.
- Return to Jerusalem and hear from **two peacemakers**, one Israeli and one Palestinian, from the **Parents Circle/Families Forum**. Both speakers lost close family members in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Have a **group processing session** and a discussion of the about the itinerary for the next day.
- Have dinner on your own.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, L]*

## ***Day 9: Friday, May 12: Masada, the Dead Sea and Shabbat (1 guide)***

- Travel south to the mountaintop fortress of **Masada**. There, take in breathtaking views of the **Judean Desert**, explore the archaeological park, and learn the dramatic story of Masada's role in the Great Revolt. Have an optional morning meditations/chanting session at Masada.
- Have the opportunity to float in the **Dead Sea**.
- Join with a Reform community for **Shabbat evening services**.
- Have **Shabbat dinner**.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, D]*

## ***Day 10: Saturday, May 13: Shabbat in Jerusalem (1 guide)***

- Take a graffiti tour in the **Nachlaot neighborhood**.
- Then have a **Shabbat afternoon learning session** with either **Yiscah Smith or Diane Bloomfield**.
- Yiscah Smith is a transgender woman in her 60s who had previously lived as an ultra-Orthodox Jewish man, with a wife and six children as part of the



# MEJDI TOURS

Chabad Hassidic community in Jerusalem. Yiscah remains an observant Jew and spiritual teacher.

- Diane Bloomfield is the creator of the Torah Yoga Approach. Diane has spent many years learning and teaching Torah, both in yeshivas and privately. She often gives Divrei Torah at Shabbat services and shiurim in Jerusalem, has taught the Torah Yoga Corner on Israel National Radio, and teaches Torah from Jerusalem online. Her Torah Yoga book is published by Wiley (Jossey-Bass) in both softcover and Kindle formats.
- Return to the hotel and have a **group processing session** and a discussion about the itinerary for the next day.
- Have **dinner on your own**.
- Go as a group to the **Burnstein Basement Klezmer** located in large Yiddish library in the heart of an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood. They begin with **Havdalah**, serve kugel, and perform live music with comical aspects.

*Hotel: Jerusalem [B, L]*

***Day 11, Sunday, May 14, 2022: Departure (No guide)***

- *Check out of your hotel. The group will then transfer to Ben Gurion Airport.*